



# Pastor Ken's Sermon

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SERMON – 18TH PENTECOST

II TIMOTHY 2:1-13

OCTOBER 9, 2022

**“SOME APOSTLES ... SOME PASTORS AND TEACHERS”**

What do Paul Wolfe, P.W. Pilgrim, O.M Grimsby, Jerome Bangert, Terje Hausken, Richard Hodges, John Carlsson, and James Gullickson have in common? No, they weren't heretics! They were my pastors. On October 19, 1959, I was baptized St. Matthews Lutheran Church in St. Paul, Minnesota by Pastor Wolfe. In April 1973 Pastor Bangert laid hands on me as I affirmed by baptism. In March 2000, Pastors Hausken, Hodges and Gullickson did the same when I was ordained a pastor.

I don't remember Pastor Wolfe – he'd left St. Matthews when I was still young. By the time I do remember a pastor, I was saying, “good morning, Pastor Pilgrim”. He was our pastor for a good while, and my teacher for my 6<sup>th</sup> grade year of confirmation instruction. He was of the “old school” of pastors whose first names were often a mystery, hidden behind an initial. No matter, you would never call them by their first name anyway ... little boys and girls who did that when I was growing up would get a talking to!

But then came the 70's, when, as my mother-in-law Marie used to say, “*the new pastors*” came – younger ones or fresh out of seminary who didn't want you to call them by their last name anymore. Next thing you knew St. Matthews folk were saying hello to “Pastor Terje.” It was a bit of an adjustment. It was Pastor Terje however, who asked me into his office one day and said he thought I should consider seminary. I was 17 or 18 at the time, so no, I didn't think about it at all! My pastors were all different sorts of men – from the stoic P.W. Pilgrim to effervescent Pastor Terje to Pastor Carlsson, about as approachable and winsome a man as you could ever meet, and of them all, probably the best preacher.

All of them were, as best I can recall, what Paul in our lesson today from II Timothy says a pastor should be – dedicated to the ministry of word and sacrament, capable teachers, not flashy – good soldiers. My colleague Ben talked to you last time about apostles – eyewitnesses of the resurrected Jesus Christ whose faith is the faith we confess, the faith in which we are baptized. They have passed on to us things we can be sure of, even if much of that is a mystery.

In today's reading Paul turns his attention to those who'll come next. That's why I mentioned my pastors. Though I would never in a million years have thought so, I've by hook or by crook “come next” after them. Evidently something from them seeped into me. II Timothy concerns itself with those who preach and teach and to some extent what pastors preach and teach – “*the good deposit*”, the faith of the apostles. But remember please the gospel is your “good deposit” too. In verses 3-6 of our lesson, Paul employs three metaphors to describe how a deposit is safeguarded.

Paul says one who guards the good deposit must be like a soldier. A soldier has many characteristics – brave, selfless, skilled, committed, but the one I think Paul has chiefly in mind is disciplined. Back in I Timothy chapter 3, Paul lists qualifications for teachers and bishops – Timothy would have been one – that's what overseers of parishes were called in those days. Paul says that besides being able to teach, they must discipline their passions, be faithful to one wife, not lovers of money, self-controlled regarding their tempers.

In our lesson today Paul extends that by saying the teacher must keep their eye on the mission of the church and avoid entirely civil matters. Before Pilate the Roman Governor Jesus said his kingdom was not of this world, so then, how could his gospel possibly have mere earthly aspirations. It doesn't - it calls men and women to the values of the kingdom that shall have no end and lets the world's kingdoms have a passions – political partisanship. We guard the gospel by not confusing it with nor exchanging it for political

good look at God's reign that way. That calls for discipline on our part – to reign in one of today's chief passions - political partisanship. We guard the gospel by not confusing it with, nor exchanging it, for political aims or power.

Paul says one who guards the good deposit must be like an athlete. Again, there are many characteristics of an athlete, but the one Paul suggests is paramount is competing according to the rules. Now he may have had in mind what Ben referred to last time as "heretics" - teachers who appeared to play by the rules but didn't since they used the Bible wrongly. In II Timothy 2:15 Paul charges his protégé to "*correctly handle the word of truth.*" How we do that is not articulated, but we get a hint by what Paul says we must avoid – senseless quarrels, let's call this "minutia", majoring in minors, squabbling over processes and procedures in the church when the weightier matters of salvation in Jesus, love, hospitality, charity, and kindness are ignored.

As Ben said so well last time, the gospel is a person – Jesus Christ. He is the truth, the way, the life. One guards the good deposit by lining up of our impulses and actions according to the truth - Christ. We ask ourselves - can we see Jesus "competing" for God's kingdom this way...can we see Jesus presenting his kingdom this way... can we see Jesus treating someone this way. We compete according to the gospel, or Paul says, we disqualify ourselves, simple as that.

Finally, Paul says, one who guards the good deposit, is like a farmer. What can we say other than farmers hope for that which they cannot control – a harvest. In I Corinthians 3:6-7 Paul says "*I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So, neither he who plants, nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.*" As we see churches surrender the faith of the apostles for faddish, convenient, thoroughly worldly messages, on all ends of the spectrum I might add, as we see Christian identification and church affiliation erode in our country, as we see enrollments in our seminaries dwindle, we'd be tempted to lose hope. The Bible says in Romans 8:25 if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently – like a farmer.

As I reflect on the men who served as my pastors' I'm pretty sure all of them would blush by my speaking of them as guardians of the good deposit for me. They'd say, "*We were just doing what any soldier/servant of God would have done.*" Maybe that's why I remember them...it's certainly how I'd like to be remembered. And maybe that's the whole point – guardians of the gospel are simply folks who remember to thank the one who will never forget them. AMEN